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About BTWOF

Books To Watch Out For publishes monthly e-letters celebrating books on various topics. Each issue includes new book announcements, brief reviews, commentary, news and, yes, good book gossip.

More Books for Women

covers the finest in thinking women's reading, plus mysteries, non-sexist children's books, and news from women's publishing. Written by the owners and staff at Women & Children First, and friends.

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The Lesbian Edition

covers both lesbian books and the whole range of books lesbians like to read. It covers news of both the women in print movement and mainstream publishing. Written and compiled by Suzanne Corson.

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The Gay Men's Edition

announces and reviews new books by and about gay men as well as other books of interest and gay publishing news. Written and compiled by Richard Labonte.

More Books for Women

- November 2006 -
Volume 2 Number 10

Welcome to this month's issue of **More Books for Women**. We are pleased to welcome new reviewers Chelsey Clammer (from Women and Children First) and Linda Bryant (Charis Books). This issue brings you reviews from *nine* different current and former booksellers, providing a wide range of selections for you to consider for your own reading pleasure. And, as the winter holidays approach, those who participate in gift-giving traditions will undoubtedly find ideas for friends, family, and other loved ones of all ages as well.

Enjoy the variety of the reviewers' voices, the books they've chosen to review, and the eclectic whole created by the sum of the parts.

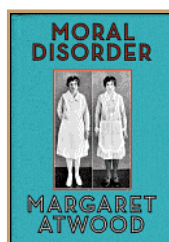
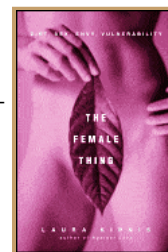
Happy reading,
Suzanne Corson



Ann Christophersen enjoys...

Laura Kipnis, in her new book, **The Female Thing: Dirt, Sex, Envy, Vulnerability**, gives us her thoughts on why women are still dissatisfied, ambivalent, and confused in spite of the enormous gains made by the feminist movement in the past thirty-five years, gains that have significantly changed the social landscape for women and improved our lot.

To do so, she explores the four aspects of women's psyches named in the subtitle of the book and asks the reader to peer a bit at the enemy within, having focused primarily until now on the enemy without. She presents some very provocative arguments to explain why women are often preoccupied by dirt and intent on "cleaning up"; why in spite of the sexual revolution and a new level of sexual equality with men, heterosexual women vacillate between excoriating men and wanting (needing?) them desperately; why women find themselves often feeling like they are lacking something, always on the edge of wanting something "more"; why it is that though the incidence of rape (and other violent crimes) has dropped over the last fifteen years, women still find themselves so fearful of being the victims of rape. Feminists may find some of what she says controversial. The book, however, is not at all anti-feminist but rather a critique of feminism, which I found fascinating and useful. Besides that, Kipnis has a very unique voice: she is really a pleasure to read for the wit and intelligence of her thought and writing. Random House/Pantheon, \$23.95, 9780375424175.



Speaking of a unique voice, I thoroughly enjoyed Margaret Atwood's new collection of stories, **Moral Disorder**. One always knows when she's reading a book by Ms. Atwood: the wry wit, the dark humor, the quick and sure movement of the narrative, the deftly managed suspense, the characters who never seem to be like people you know but feel confident that Atwood knows intimately are all characteristics of this extraordinary writer. The stories in *Moral Disorder* are connected but very diverse, and some are told in the first person, some in the third. The main character, Nell, gets things going in the first story, "The Bad News," when she describes a specific (but one learns soon, typical) scene with her partner of many years, Tig. From that moment on, it's hard to look up from this book, the characters and narrative and language and perspective are so utterly

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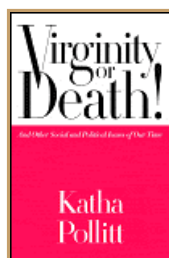


compelling. Doubleday/Nan A. Talese, \$23.95, 9780385503846.



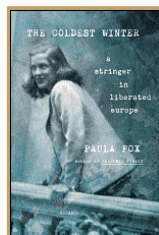
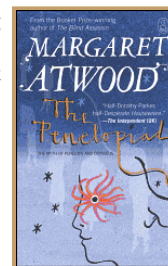
Linda Bubon loves...

If Gloria Steinem and Lily Tomlin had a daughter (when they were very young) she might be Eve Ensler. Feminist activist, performer, playwright, intrepid traveler, Ensler is a global warrior, getting down with oppressed women everywhere, helping to create change, and looking for hope in the midst of hopeless situations. In ***Insecure at Last: Losing It in our Security Obsessed World***, her first book written exclusively for the printed page, Ensler takes the reader by the hand as she travels from Bosnia to Pakistan to Afghanistan to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, where she sits with women raped in war, women stoned in the streets, and where women have been kidnapped and killed in a lawless border town. She listens, she cries with women out of their minds with grief and rage, she bears witness to the madness and injustice of their situations. She visits Cindy Sheehan's camp in Crawford, Texas, interviews women prisoners in upstate New York, and sits on porches with women in New Orleans. She won't let us look away from this very real world - our world. She shares her own story, too, and inspires us with her own confrontations of her fears as well as the stories of some amazing "Vagina Warriors" who work everyday to help women on this planet heal and fight back. This is not an easy book to read, but it is an essential one. I challenge feminists everywhere to read this powerful new book and think about what you can do to change the world. Random House/Villard, \$21.95, 9781400063345.



If you're not a regular reader of *The Nation*, you've missed some great essays by social critic Katha Pollitt. Fortunately Random House has put together a paperback of the best of her columns over the past five years, ***Virginity or Death! And Other Social and Political Issues of Our Time***. The essays are pithy, witty, insightful, and very entertaining. Whether you're a news junkie or rarely read a newspaper, you'll learn everything you need to know about current events in the past five years, how the right has spun them, how the left has responded (often disappointingly), and how they have affected women. I love her feminist analysis of national politics, so often absent in mainstream and so-called alternative news sources. And she's so wickedly sarcastic! What a great antidote to the smarmy voice of the right-wing media. Random House, \$13.95, 9780812976380.

The Myths Series from Scottish publisher Canongate is beginning to come out in paperback, and I highly recommend Margaret Atwood's take on the Odyssey, ***The Penelopiad***. Atwood looks at what Penelope's life was like during Odysseus's long absence, the intrigue of the court, and what may have happened when he returned. Why were those twelve maidens hung? How was it that she failed to recognize him upon his return? The story is told partly in Penelope's voice, and partly in the collective voice, the "Chorus Line," of the twelve maids. Atwood's wit and brilliance are on full display; as always she makes us look at the story in an entirely new way and allows the reader to discover what the real story may have been. Canongate, \$12, 9781841957982.

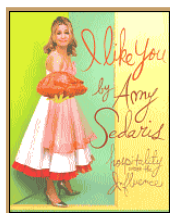


Also just out in paperback, ***The Coldest Winter: A Stringer in Liberated Europe*** is a slim memoir by Paula Fox (*Borrowed Finery*, Holt, \$12, 9780805071849) of the late nineteen-forties that paints an indelible picture of post-war Europe. Fox is a young twenty-something, living in Greenwich Village, staying out late, going out to jazz clubs in Harlem, getting her feet wet writing, when she has the opportunity to travel to London through some contacts of her father's. There she lands a job as a stringer for a London paper and is sent first to Paris, then to Prague and Poland.

We see the bombed-out cities through her eyes, meet the shell-shocked and traumatized, and really get a feel for what it must have been like - the cold, the hunger, the conniving for a meal or a story. Fox is a wonderful writer and her memories - of both her own naiveté and of the people and scenes she witnessed - are priceless. St. Martin's/Picador, \$13, 9780312426248.



Megan Bayles raves about...

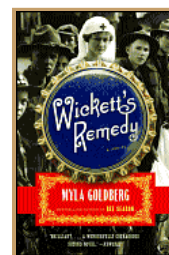


I've been waiting for **I Like You: Hospitality Under the Influence** by Amy Sedaris for many months. She may be the lesser-known Sedaris sibling, but Amy holds her own and then some. In addition to hilarious (read: laugh-out-loud) advice for the novice and skilled host(ess) alike, Sedaris has collected fully functional, if tongue-in-cheek and off-color, tips and delicious-sounding recipes. The photos and illustrations are ultimately kitschy, and there's nothing better than hearing customer after customer in our store make the same exclamations when they realize they're looking at photos of drug paraphernalia. Just because you don't *have* an imaginary boyfriend for whom to cook dinner doesn't mean you, too, won't benefit from Sedaris's sage and sound advice. Warner Books, \$27.99, 9780446578844.



Anna Eley is up all night reading...

Wickett's Remedy is a unique and compelling look into the world of Lydia Kilkenny, a young Irish-Catholic woman from South Boston, just before the United States enters into the first World War. Lydia is a shop girl at an upscale department store. She is soon swept away from her working class life by a young and sickly medical student named Henry Wickett. Lydia and Henry marry after a short courtship and soon after, Henry leaves medical school to develop a mail-order medicine he calls Wickett's Remedy. However, once developed, their plans are almost immediately thrown off-course by the influenza epidemic of 1918.



The plot has many different elements working at once but is pulled together nicely by the beautiful writing of Myla Goldberg (*Bee Season*, Doubleday, \$13, 9780385498807). The power of the story is reinforced by the clearly well-researched historical setting. For me, reading *Wickett's Remedy* was enjoyable because it brought history to life from a time period I previously knew very little about. As a bit of a history nerd, I found it to be quite powerful and engaging. One of the many things I liked is the way Goldberg included pieces of narrative along the margins of many of the pages. These narratives function as memories from the dead which sometimes contradict what our heroine remembers. This is a really interesting way to address the ways in which memory works both for and against us, and it adds a unique perspective to the overall plot. This is definitely a book for anyone who loves a good historical novel - you can get involved with the story of Lydia's character while recognizing the well-crafted detailing of life in early twentieth-century Boston. Random House/Knopf, \$14, 9781400078127.

Editor's Note: The paperback release of *Wickett's Remedy* is noteworthy because substantial parts of it have changed since the hardcover's publication. Due to the unusual notes in the margins that Anna mentions above, the book had to be re-typeset for the paperback release, which allowed the author a rare opportunity to do some post-initial publication rewriting. It is estimated that approximately seven percent of the content is different. Not wanting to penalize the readers who purchased the hardcover edition of the book, Goldberg has posted the edited passages on her website, www.mylagoldberg.com.



Y: The Last Man Volume 1: Unmanned, written by Brian K. Vaughan and illustrated by Pia Guerra and Jose Marzan, Jr., includes issues 1-5 of this comic book series. The story is this: In 2002 a plague hits that kills every male mammal on earth with the exception of a young man named Yorick Brown and his male pet monkey, Ampersand. The how and why Yorick and Ampersand survived this worldwide "gendercide" is unknown and provides an intriguing premise for the plot of the series.

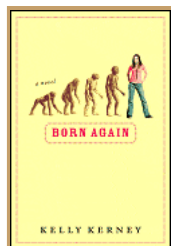
Yorick spends the first five issues finding his congresswoman mother, trying to get to his girlfriend in Australia, and running from the Daughters of the Amazons (who believe that the death of the male race occurred in order to end the world's patriarchal rule). Yorick is accompanied on his travels by a government agent, Agent 355, as well as a brilliant bioengineer. Their mission is to uncover the origin of the plague and to find a way to save the human race.

This is an awesome comic book! The writing is really well done. Vaughan has a superb gift for capturing the dialogue of young people in a way that makes him comparable to Joss Whedon. The art is also good; Guerra and Marzan create simple

yet expressive illustrations for the series. Although this is not such an original plot, Vaughan takes it in a new and interesting direction and adds a distinctly feminist perspective. *Y: The Last Man* is a comic series that brings up important questions and at the same time is really fun and addictive. I have read books 1 through 6 so far and am anxious to keep reading. If you're a Joss Whedon fan, then this is definitely something you'll enjoy, and if you're new to comic books, *Y: The Last Man* is a great place to start. DC Comics, \$12.99, 9781563899805.



Catherine Jacquet suggests...



Kelly Kerney's debut novel, **Born Again**, is an engaging, compassionate view of the increasing number of Americans raised within the insular world of religious fundamentalism. Mel is a fourteen-year-old Bible quiz champion and a self-described "Warrior for Christ." Kerney brilliantly captures not only the worldview of a teenager, but also that of a teenager navigating life through the lens of fundamental religion. As a person whose blood typically boils over when hearing or reading the rhetoric of the right wing, I was pleasantly surprised to find that I actually *liked* the main character. I wanted to lift her out of the pages and take her home. Mel had just enough innocence that the reader can't help but feel compassionate towards her. And, it doesn't hurt that she is willing to be challenged, and she does eventually bend. This is a great read for adults as well as teens. I highly recommend *Born Again* to readers interested in the American religious right, teen culture, or anyone seeking a humorous and entertaining read, plain and simple. Harcourt, \$14, 9780156031455.



Chelsey Clammer adores...

Unlike some murder mysteries where the victims die and nothing else is heard from their perspective, Lynn Miller's latest novel, **Death of a Department Chair**, offers a refreshing challenge to the notion of the silenced dead. Set on the campus of fictional Austin University, the mystery combines the frustrating politics of academia with the suspense of a good Agatha Christie novel. The plot unfolds through the discovered diary of the murdered Chair of the Literature and Rhetoric department, Isabel Vittorio. After her mysterious murder, Isabel's diary was found in the office of her colleague - and past lover - Miriam Held, and thus situates Miriam as a prime suspect in the murder. It is Miriam who is narrating the story a year after the murder occurred, but included in this great narration is Miriam's own "editor's notes" that show her own humorous opinions on the politics surrounding the murder. Absorbed in the frustrating aspects of hiring a new faculty member - that Isabel's biases for one candidate had complicated both before she dies and by her death itself - Miriam and her colleagues become wrapped up in suspicion of each other as the murderer for their own academic self-interests. Isabel was not a well-liked department chair, as is evident through many of the gripes her colleagues make about her, but through Isabel's diary entries we are able to witness her in a light other than the harsh one that her colleagues and past lovers cast her in. The beautiful aspect of this novel is the fact that the lesbian relationships are not sensationalized, although the relationships in themselves are sensational. The characters in this mystery are first and foremost people before they are identified as lesbians, and the haunting aspects of the murder itself push the novel to a suspenseful and surprising ending. University of Wisconsin Press/Terrace Books, \$24.95 paperback, 9780299219741.



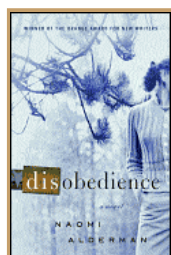
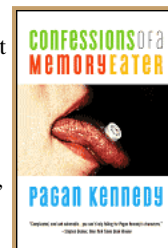
Lori Lansens (*Rush Home Road*) has done her homework for her sophomore work. **The Girls** is a wonderful novel about the lives of sisters Rose and Ruby Darlen. More than just a story about family, *The Girls* dives into the complex and lovable life of the oldest living craniopagus twins. Conjoined at the head, Rose details life with her unseparable sister, while allowing Ruby to interject with a few thoughts of her own. Instead of presenting these women's lives as something fantastical, or that their disability is an obstacle that must be fixed or overcome, Lansens instead beautifully creates the lived experience of conjoined

twins. She never sensationalizes them, but engages the reader with both Rose's and Ruby's accounts of themselves. Although lengthy, the novel reads quickly. I found myself unable to put it down, breezed through it in two days, and was left wanting more. It's a perfect read for any lover of amazingly well-written fiction, or for someone interested in the politics of disability. With beautiful imagery, hilariously complex moments, and two characters who will reside in your heart forever, *The Girls* is easy to love, but hard to let go of. Little, Brown and Company, \$23.95, 9780316069038.



Mary Ellen Kavanaugh is reading...

Confessions of a Memory Eater by Pagan Kennedy came out in the spring from Leapfrog Press. By now, I've come to realize what a chameleon Kennedy is, so I should not have been surprised by this story. And yet, I was. Our main character, Win Duncan, is down and out on his luck. His career and his marriage are falling apart. At just the moment when it seems things could not get worse, Duncan is summoned by an old college pal, Phil Litminov, who has created an experimental drug, Mem, which allows the user to live inside his/her memories with great brilliance and clarity. When Duncan, revisits a memory of his early relationship with his wife, who now wants out of their boring marriage, he is reminded of the reasons he fell in love with her, and endeavors to win her back. He revisits early family memories, which clash with what the real life participants in real time remember, becomes close friends with another of the drug testers, Sue (a former love of Litminov's), and searches for Litminov when he disappears. All of this, to my way of thinking, is really tangential to the questions this drug raises: What is memory? Can we rely on it? How do our memories serve us? How do we make sense of the disparities between our own memories and those of others who shared the same experience? In the midst of all this experimentation, the only thing holding Duncan's life together is his work on Thomas de Quincey, the nineteenth-century author of *Confessions of An Opium Eater*, which provides the reader with an historical understanding of the quest of the drug user. While I enjoyed the book and it left me thinking about a great deal, I wonder, if I were more versed in post-modern literary criticism, how else I might read this novel. I do believe there is a richness here that is escaping me, and I look forward to finding that po-mo reader who can share her/his understanding with me. Leapfrog Press, \$14.95, 9780972898485.



A number of UK friends had been recommending **Disobedience** by Naomi Alderman to me, so I was most eager to get my hands on it. The telling of this story is by far its finest feature - so much so that it is a challenge to even talk about the plot without compromising the reader's experience of the unfolding of the story. Suffice it to say, *Disobedience* asks questions about Judaism and conservatism vs modernism and friendship and obligation and obedience, and, of course, disobedience. While we can easily see the pain that conservative religious impositions cause, we can just as easily see how a woman with no moorings suffers just as well. In this age of so much religion all around, we each must ask "what is the place of a religion in my worldview?" The three main characters, childhood friends who come together again at the death of one's father, are faced with just these grappings. If you enjoy Monica Ali (*Brick Lane*), Zadie Smith (*On Beauty*), or any other smart young women writers who take British culture to task, this winner of the Orange Award for New Writers is for you. Simon & Schuster/Touchstone, \$24, 9780743291569.

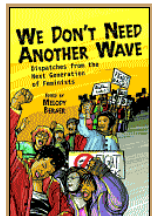
As promised: Marion Nestle's **What To Eat** is an excellent reference book. I realized, as I was working my way through the 600+ pages, that perhaps, I should simply keep it on the kitchen table and dip into it on occasion. Smart move! But not for a lack of readability - no, it reads just fine. It's just that there is such a wealth of information here, I found myself wanting to slow down to absorb some of the facts, so that when I'm with my family of origin, I have some concrete data at hand to explain why margarine might not be such a good food choice after all. They aren't alone in doing something they think is helpful, but for which research exists, proving otherwise. The intersection of commerce and food has become so loud in the country, that, I think, most of us are rather confused about what to eat. Nestle attributes the lion's share of confusion to (1) experts who isolate food components and health issues. And (2) a food industry that markets based on



profits. With these two concepts as a background of understanding, she explores trans-fats in processed foods, methylmercury in fish, the whole question of soy, salmonella in eggs, sugar in cereals, gmo's (genetically modified organisms), and more. I think this book belongs in the kitchen or library of anyone who is serious about what food they are consuming. North Point Press, \$30, 9780865477049.

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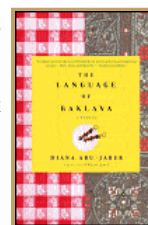
Sara Luce Look thinks these are tasty...



I'm of the generation who came of age with *Listen up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation* (edited by Barbara Findlen, Seal Press, \$16.95, 9781580050548), and it was a very important book for me. Now Seal has published its successor, ***We Don't Need Another Wave: Dispatches From the Next Generation of Feminists***, edited by Melody Berger (publisher of the *F Word* zine). The contributors are a great mix of folks, including a bio-male and trans folks. They are racially diverse, have different kinds of politics, and embrace different forms of feminism, everything from "old-school" liberal feminism to DIY feminism. The essays range from confessional to political in style. It begins with a poem by Alix Olson, "The Womyn Before," and a preface from Lisa Jervis, founder of *Bitch* - she's the oldest contributor in the book.

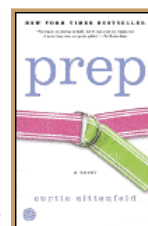
One of my favorite essays was by the bio man, Joshua Russell, a respectful critique of March for Women's Lives. Alexa Vernon, in "Troubling the Performance of the Traditional Incest Narrative," writes about being victimized by incest narratives, how hard it is when survivors can't remember all the details, and does it really matter? Other favorites include Mary Christmas, founder of *Spread* magazine, writing about sex workers; Stacey Ann Chin's "On Rooms to Fight and Fuck and Crow" about trans issues; "Reclaiming the Media for a Progressive Media Future" by Jennifer Pozner, a great piece. But one that I know I'll remember for some time to come is "Rice Tight With Beans: Loving Caribbean Skin" by Lenelle Moise, a Haitian-American performance poet. Its first line is "I have not transcended racism." Though her female lover of six years is Puerto Rican, she's often mistaken for white by others. So even though they're both women of color, the couple sometimes experiences the hassles familiar to those in interracial relationships and the frustrations of negotiating a white world. Lenelle's lover says that number one on the successful interracial lesbian relationship to do list is to communicate about *everything*. Seal Press, \$15.95, 9781580051828.

I loved *Crescent*, the first novel by Diana Abu-Jaber (W.W. Norton, \$13.95, 9780393325546), about a woman who works at a Lebanese restaurant, with its touches of magical realism and lots of details about food. The food motif continues in her memoir ***The Language of Baklava***. Diana is mixed-race, with a Jordanian father and a mom who is Irish-German, and the mixed heritages definitely come into play around food. She grew up with a little bit of everything, from Velveta sandwiches to falafel. The book even has recipes. When Diana was around eight, her father took them to Jordan, so her memories of that experience are included, as is the time she became friends with a white boy who told Diana that he had trouble with "the natives," the Jordanian kids who hung around the courtyard where Diana lived. If this sounds familiar, as it did to me, this chapter was excerpted in the anthology *The Friend Who Got Away*. Random House/Knopf, \$14.95, 9781400077762.

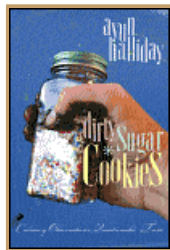


Speaking of ***The Friend Who Got Away: Twenty Women's True Life Tales of Friendships That Blew up, Burned out or Faded Away***, edited by Jenny Offill and Elissa Schappell, it's worth buying for the Dorothy Allison story alone. In "Dangerous," Dorothy writes about growing up as a young lesbian, having sex with a bunch of her friends, how her life has changed since then, and how her friendships have changed. Actually I was completely taken by the whole book, and I think it would ring true for many women: And where did that friend go? Broadway, \$14.95, 9780767917193.

Curtis Sittenfeld's debut novel ***Prep*** is based on her (yes, her) own boarding school experiences according to an interesting interview with the author in the back of the book. In *Prep*, fourteen-year-old Lee gets to attend the prestigious Ault School in the Northeast with a scholarship, but it was kind of a fluke that she was accepted and that it worked out that she could attend. As an outsider, she drinks in all that is around her while also building a place for herself at Ault. Toward the end of this coming-of-age story, Lee's interviewed



by someone from the *New York Times* about life in boarding school. She is quite frank in the interview, which gets her into trouble... What I especially liked about *Prep* is that the author did a really good job with race and class issues in a boarding school environment. Random House, \$13.95, 9780812972351.

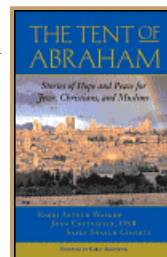


Ayun Halliday, known for her contributions to parenting anthologies like *Breeder*, her own books like *No Touch Monkey* and *The Big Rumpus*, and her zine, *East Village Inky*, writes about food and her own growing up in **Dirty Sugar Cookies: Culinary Observations and Questionable Taste**. She summarizes it well with this line: "How does a picky eater morph into a low-budget epicure?" I love food memoirs, and this is a very humorous one, bringing back many memories about food in the seventies. Seal Press, \$14.95, 9781580051507.



Linda Bryant recommends...

The Tent of Abraham: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, by Joan Chittister, OSB, Mushid Saadi Shakur Chishti, and Rabbi Arthur Waskow, caught my eye initially because I had recently started meeting with a group of interfaith women. As I enjoy the richness of sharing our lives, I want to better understand the roots of the wars we've all participated in and to find ways to work together toward peace. This book reflects on the Abrahamic story - and the very different ways of telling it - as a family story that needs to be heard from each point of view and then to be recognized as the same story, the same family. Each of the authors is deeply open to other traditions, and they do the work that feminist theologians have long called "reimagining" the story and its significance to the peace process of today. They encourage ways to make peace in our own communities by engaging in authentic dialogue - and they also report on the ways that they are working to bring political change step by step. I wish world leaders would follow their careful instructions on how to have real communication that leads to real action. Beacon Press, \$24.95, 9780807077283.



Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith by Barbara Brown Taylor is so real and alive that I found myself reading whole chapters aloud to my sweetheart, who identifies herself as a Jewish atheist, and she loved it. Barbara lives in the mountains of north Georgia but spent many years as an Episcopal priest in Atlanta. Her earlier books are collections of sermons - this one is a very personal story of compassion fatigue, one more woman trying to do everything right and to do it with faith and love. When she steps aside from the job of pastor and has to determine how she wants to structure her life, which parts still work for her, and what

that means in terms of her faith, she reveals a very human and loveable woman who has deep wisdom and also an eagerness to learn and grow. HarperSanFrancisco, \$23.95, 9780060771744.



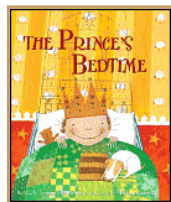
For the Kids



Recommendations from Linda Bubon

My picture book recommendations this month meet the "3-R" criteria: rhythm, repetition, and rhyme. Not only does this make for a pleasant out-loud reading experience that will hold most antsy pre-schoolers' attentions, it's the path to reading on their own.

The Gingerbread Girl by Lisa Campbell Ernst not only changes the gender of the main cookie, it changes the harsh ending as the g-girl outwits the fox - and in a kind of epilogue, tames him with gingerbread crumbs so she's able to ride him on more rollicking adventures: "We'll run and we'll run/ With a leap and a twirl./ I outfoxed the fox,/ I'm the Gingerbread Girl!" This is a fairly long story, but because of the 3 R's, it will hold the attention of three- to six-year-olds. Penguin/Dutton, \$16.99 hardcover, 9780525476672.



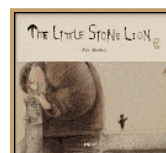
Sure there are a lot of stories about princesses, even some of which a feminist can approve, but how about a good prince story? **The Prince's Bedtime** by Joanne Oppenheim, illustrated by Miriam Latimer, is a jolly, witty look at a royal family run amuck because the prince *never* wants to go to sleep. The royal physician tries a potion (which helps the queen get to sleep), dancers and a magician try to entertain, but nothing works until a sweet old woman comes carrying a book! "But where are the pictures?" he asked in surprise./ 'You'll see them,' she said, 'if you just close your eyes.'" Clever gal. Barefoot Books, \$16.99 hardcover, 9781841485973.

I was afraid that **On the Night You Were Born**, written and illustrated by Nancy Tillman, was going to be a rip-off of *On the Day You Were Born* (Debra Fraser), but it's not; in fact, I like it much better as a new baby book. It's shorter, for one thing, the rhyme is beautiful, and the theme is that there has never been anyone as marvelous as you. And the paintings are so lovely - the delight in the animals' faces and body language just made me smile. This is a winner as a new baby gift, or a birthday gift for a pre-schooler to remind him/her of just how special they are. And aren't most babies born at night? Holtzbrinck/Feiwel & Friends, \$16.95 hardcover, 9780312346065.

Recommendations from Sara Luce Look

Based on a Nordic fable, **Lucia and the Light** tells the story of Lucia who lives in the far north. One day the sun vanishes, and though afraid, Lucia wants to go out and rescue the sun. To do so, she must battle the trolls who live on the frozen mountain. This play on the solstice story is by Phyllis Root with great illustrations by Mary Grandpre. Though a picture book, the story is a bit too long and too scary for younger ones, so it's best for those ages 5-8. Candlewick Books, \$16.99 hardcover, 9780763622961.

The Little Stone Lion by Kim Xiong is a very simple story with one sentence per page, good for children as young as three. There is one stone lion in the village, older than the village elder, who acts as the village's guardian spirit. He holds the memories of the elders and protects the children, though they may go off and forget him. This is a beautiful, spiritual book which would also be appropriate as a gift book for adults. The illustrations, also by Kim Xiong, are inspired by traditional Chinese art. Heryin Books, \$15.95 hardcover, 9780976205616.



Sixteen-year-old Angelina Rossini thinks her life in a small Vermont town is pretty normal until her dad, who came to the U.S. from Italy, has a stroke. **Life As I Knew It** by Randi Hacker is a first-person confessional novel for young adults. In addition to Angelina's thoughts about having a dad who is dying, there are also bits about what it's like for queer people in a small town: Angelina's best friend is a gay boy named Jax, who Angelina's in love with, and her mother's best friend is a lesbian. Small town and family issues are also explored. Simon & Schuster, \$6.99, 9781416909958.

Recommendation from Megan Bayles

Lush, Natasha Friend's follow-up to her highly acclaimed first novel, *Perfect* (Milkweed Editions, \$6.95, 9781571316516), again tackles the real life-at-home issues facing young adolescent girls today. Whereas *Perfect's* protagonist was dealing with bulimia in the wake of her father's death, *Lush* follows a junior high school student through her attempt to deal with the crumbling of her home life due to her father's alcoholism. As if being a junior high kid isn't hard enough, Sam finds herself having to cover up the effects of her dad's drinking, protect her little brother, and try to deal with her increasingly distant mother, who copes through yoga. Thinking that high schoolers hold a great deal more wisdom than herself, she strikes

up an anonymous correspondence at the library with Juliet, who Sam believes is a high school girl. What she discovers is that even high schoolers have problems with their parents and that people aren't always who they seem to be. *Lush* is a moving portrayal of the trials and tribulations of being a thirteen-year-old girl, one who has to grow up faster than she should. Scholastic, \$16.99 hardcover, 9780439853460.



Books To Watch Out For

Random House/Ballantine Books has announced that they've purchased the rights to Victorian mystery writer Anne Perry's first stand-alone historical epic. *The Sheen on the Silk*, set in the late days of the Byzantine empire, is about a woman who masquerades as a eunuch physician in order to learn the truth about her condemned brother. Anne Perry is known for her two long-running mystery series, one featuring Thomas and Charlotte Pitt and the other, William Monk, as well as for her growing World War I series about the Reavley family.

Fans of folk singer Ronnie Gilbert will be happy to hear that she's written a new memoir, *Ronnie Gilbert: A Radical Life with Songs*, which will be published by University of California Press. In addition to the story of the Weavers, in which Ronnie was the only female member, the book will discuss the censorship she and the Weavers' faced and the revived interest in their music. Gilbert is also the author of *Ronnie Gilbert on Mother Jones: Face to Face With the Most Dangerous Woman in America*, published by Conari Press in 1993.



Miscellany

Cornelia Funke's *Inkheart*, about twelve-year-old Meggie and her father, who has the ability to "read characters out of their books," will be brought to movie screens by New Line Cinema. Brendan Fraser has been cast in the role of the father, and co-stars include Helen Mirren, Paul Bettany, and Jim Broadbent.

Online magazine *Salon* recently interviewed Camille Paglia (subscription or free site pass required):

www.salon.com/opinion/feature/2006/10/27/paglia.

Publishers Weekly interviewed children's author Tamora Pierce, who we featured in [MBW#2](#):

www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6385459.html?nid=2788.



Awards

News about recent award winners and nominees...

Man Booker Prize

Kiran Desai, at age 35, became the youngest woman ever to win the Man Booker Prize. She won for *The Inheritance of Loss*, reviewed in [MBW#7](#), which the judges said was "a magnificent novel of humane breadth and wisdom, comic tenderness and powerful political acuteness." In her acceptance speech, she honored her mother Anita Desai, who has been nominated for the Booker Prize herself three times. "The debt I owe to my mother is so profound that I feel the book is hers as much as mine. It was written in her company and in her wisdom and kindness."

National Book Awards

The National Book Foundation has announced the nominees for their annual awards which will be bestowed at a ceremony on November 15 (hosted by Fran Lebowitz). Of the twenty nominated books, only five were written by women. Those five are:
Fiction: *Eat the Document*, Dana Spiotta, Scribner/Simon & Schuster
Poetry: *Averno*, Louise Glück, Farrar, Straus & Giroux

Young People's Literature: *Keturah and Lord Death*, Martine Leavitt, Boyds Mills Press; *Sold*, Patricia McCormick, Hyperion; and *The Rules of Survival*, Nancy Werlin, Penguin. (None of the books in the Nonfiction category were authored by women.)

Better news is that the foundation is presenting their Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters to poet Adrienne Rich. In making the announcement, they said, "For more than fifty years, her eloquent and visionary writings have shaped the world of poetry as well as feminist and political thought." This honor includes a \$10,000 award.

The Quills

The [Quills Award](#) winners were recently announced and include Julie Powell, named Debut Author of the Year for *Julie and Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen*, *Twelve Sharp* by Janet Evanovich in the Mystery/Suspense/Thriller category, *Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem* by Maya Angelou in the Poetry category, and *Breath of Snow and Ashes* by Diana Gabaldon for Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror. For a complete list of winners, visit www.nbc4.tv/entertainment/10047715/detail.html online.



We hope you've enjoyed this issue of **More Books for Women**.

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With thanks,

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